

Steiner (L. H.)

ORATION

BEFORE THE

Medical and Surgical Society

OF BALTIMORE,

AT ITS

FOURTH ANNIVERSARY MEETING,

*January 17, 1859,*

BY

LEWIS H. STEINER, M. D.



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BALTIMORE, January 17th, 1859.

DEAR SIR,

The undersigned were appointed a Committee by the Medical and Surgical Society of Baltimore, to request for publication, a copy of the very interesting and appropriate Address delivered by you at their Anniversary Meeting. Hoping that you may be able to gratify their wishes, we remain,

Respectfully yours, &c.

JOHN F. MONMONNIER,  
J. J. R. KROZER,  
W. G. SMULL,

*Committee.*

TO DR. LEWIS H. STEINER.

BALTIMORE, January 17, 1859.

GENTLEMEN,

I acknowledge the receipt of yours of this date, requesting, in the name of the Society you represent, a copy of the Address I had the honor of delivering this Evening. As the Address was prepared at the request of the Society, it is subject to your disposal.

With best wishes for the success of the Society,

I have the honor to be, yours, &c.

LEWIS H. STEINER.

DRS. J. F. MONMONNIER,  
J. J. R. KROZER,  
W. G. SMULL.

## ORATION.

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MR. PRESIDENT AND GENTLEMEN :

IN accepting the position, which your kind preference has given me this evening, I have not been unmindful of the difficulties attendant upon the preparation of a discourse, worthy of the character of the Medical and Surgical Society, and yet not dissonant with the festive character of this Anniversary Meeting. It is a rare thing for members of our profession, to cast aside the cares and annoyances incident to its practice, and to meet together for the exchange of friendly courtesies,—to clasp a brother's hand with a warmth and geniality that will cause the blood to flow gaily through its appointed channels. All this is interdicted by the special character of their engagements, which separate them from their brethren and make their lives, to a certain extent, scenes of solitary toil amid wretchedness, misery and woe. But when the physician has met his brethren for such purposes, as are involved in the present meeting, let not the hour be spent in grave discussion of science, in attempts at the discovery of the secrets of pathological troubles, or even in debates as to the efficacy of new remedial agents. Away with all these heavy questions, they will interfere with digestion and will mar the pleasure of the evening.\* You will permit me to select a subject, which, although of interest to us all, yet has a ridiculous side that makes it suitable for discussion at a supper table.

The great Epic poet of the Romans began his *Æneid* with "Arms and the man I sing," and, with your permission, the brevity of such an introduction shall be imitated by me

\* The Oration was delivered at the annual supper.

to night, by simply announcing that "Quacks and their Success" is the subject of my discourse. An examination is proposed into the causes of this success,—hoping to make such an examination with the kindest feelings and most good-natured strictures on what is an evil somewhat peculiar to our age.

Quackery, wherever found, is based upon a *misapplication* of some principle or fact, and hence invariably presupposes the existence of a modicum of Truth as its starting point. Just as the counterfeit coin has a certain value, with the unwary, on account of its resemblance to that which is genuine, to which value has been given by legal enactment, so all Quackery must proceed from a misapplication of a known truth, or an attempted imitation of this truth in various forms. The counterfeit presupposes the existence of a genuine coin, and were the latter deprived of its value, the former would, from necessity, cease to be a means of deception to the world. Thus Quackery is one of the strongest arguments in favor of the existence of true, sound Medical Philosophy, striking its roots far down in the earliest history of mankind, and having grown up, under the auspices of giant minds, until, as the stately tree, it fills the observer with feelings of the deepest admiration. Just as the feeble *jets d'eau* of art may for the moment attract our attention by the spray they shower on all sides from their, not ungraceful, columns of water, and from the miniature rainbows which nature's sun paints by means of their tiny drops,—just as these remind the lover of nature that they are pitiful imitations of mighty geysers and fountains that its energies is producing for the bewilderment of man,—so whatever of good and truth may shine forth in the various systems of Quackery is but an imitation or a misapplication of that which is inherent to sound Medical Philosophy.

If then Quackery, by its very existence, proves that there is something real and true in Medicine, it follows, as a necessary consequence, that it could not exist unless it possessed *some* truth as its starting point. Hence it must not be considered as a baseless fabric or an empty lie, but rather as the gaudy and meretricious adornment of a truth which has

thus become perverted from its legitimate uses and prostituted to ignoble and improper uses. From such a view of its nature, we will not lightly cast aside, with contempt, every form this modern Proteus may assume, but will rather feel it our duty to tear off the specious garb,—to throw away the husk to the swine and, grasping whatever truth it may contain, appropriate it to the use of our profession and of mankind. By pursuing an opposite course, violence is done to all right and justice on our side, and the result is that the advocates of the Quackery we are combatting, instead of being overthrown by our weapons, raise the cry of persecution—a cry always provoking respectful attention and attracting crowds of chivalric helpers,—and many partizan friends are added to their numbers. This must be the result, since mankind are always pleased with truth if it is invested with brilliant colors, and when any thing containing truth, thus attractively arrayed, is inveighed against by the Medical Profession which desires to destroy the accompanying errors,—then the world with a morbid sentimentality clings to that which is so violently treated and gulps down, with most excellent pharyngeal extension, all the error on account of the little truth it envelopes.

But I find that I am anticipating the regular logical developement of my subject. Let us define Medical Quackery. It has become a sort of vague term, with the world,—unaccompanied by a clear idea as to its true and legitimate meaning. It has been applied to every thing proceeding from an extra-professional source, whereas very often with those who can shout the shibboleth of the profession—can brandish the parchment diploma that constitutes them Doctors of Medicine—in sober truth, if the charge of Quackery were adduced, they would be compelled, at the forum of conscience at least, to plead *guilty* and throw themselves on the mercy of the Court.

Medical Quackery may be defined as that mode of practising Medicine, which takes one idea and applies it to all kinds of disease without reference to their origin, or administers one remedy for all possible diseases. The primitive notion of the nature of the disease, or of the applicability

of the remedy, must be based on truth. Thus that quasi-system, which denominates itself Hydropathy, takes its start and derives all its claims to our respect from the therapeutic qualities of water as a tonic application in certain forms of disease. This is a *fact* incontestible. It has been made known, to the profession and the world, by an experience of centuries. But the builders of this one fact into a system, have acted on the idea that what is applicable to one disease is *per consequence* applicable to all—an idea, in its very essence, most palpably and glaringly false, entitled to no more respect than the declaration of the notorious Sam Patch that “some things could be done as well as others.” It arises from the ignorance of the father of the system as to the manifold nature of disease and the tissues of the body which are attacked by it.

Again; Homeoquackery, in the hands of its founder Hahnemann, had some truth as its basis, but, by a false syllogism—an illogical induction—it was arrayed in all the stately and imposing grandeur of a system—unable to accomplish a tithe of its pretensions. Because certain medicinal agents, in large quantities, produce effects on the system, somewhat resembling the very disease which these agents in smaller quantities were known to benefit,—the conclusion was deduced from a few instances of this kind—and these cases not the best authenticated—that *all* disease must be curable through the administration of substances which would produce similar effects on the human system. Admitting, for the sake of argument, that the instances cited are correct, yet that induction is far too sweeping which is based on so small a number of particulars. We deny, however, that the instances cited are correct, since the mere appearance of certain signs of disease, coincident with the administration of certain agents does not establish a relation of cause and effect; and thus one of the corner stones of the system, which claims as its motto—*similia a similibus curantur*, is shown to be unsafe. But the system finds its greatest peculiarity in the mode it administers medicine—in infinitesimally small quantities. Here is a gleam of truth. Medicines had been administered in too herculean doses, for



the necessity of disease, during centuries; only a certain amount is required to produce their therapeutic action—all above this injures the animal system. The error of the followers of this School consists in their rushing to the other extreme, having cleared the dangers of Scylla they are wrecked on Charybdis;—finding that diminution of quantity increased the efficacy of the medicine in consequence of an avoidance of the injuries of an overdose, they overlooked the limits of this diminution and boldly declared that the benefits of medicine increased, inversely with the amount administered, *ad infinitum*. The truth underlying this avowed principle of Homeoquackery demands our respect;—when it is warped from its real significance by the Homeoquack then its proper meed is ridicule. He knows that it cannot be defended by argument, and hence takes refuge in the general tower of defence of all Quackery—boasts of the *success* of his practice and thus endeavors to deceive the senses where the intellect reveals nought but silly, childlike *misapplications* of truth.

Routine treatment of disease by the Profession,—that is the treatment of disease in accordance with the name by which the physician recognizes it, instead of the treatment of the symptoms presented in the case—this also smacks strongly of Quackery. An effort is made to force every disease to comply with the precise dimensions of the Procrustean bed, that has been assigned it in nosological arrangements. But though one crystal may resemble another in all the physical qualities appertaining to crystals, yet disease follows a different rule in this respect or, rather, seemingly sets all rules at defiance. There are no two cases of disease exactly alike,—some modification, produced by constitution, temperament, condition of the body or external circumstances, always exists, and each case thus becomes, as it were, *sui generis*. Wherever disease is treated alone in accordance with Nosology—that is, given the name, there must be employed the plan of treatment attached to that name—we have a false Medical Philosophy—a strong savor of Quackery. Indeed it smells as strongly of Quackery, as that treatment which is based on the administration of one remedy for all diseases, because it was found really useful in one. Quackery *in* the

profession neglects attention to the different forms assumed by disease, ignores differences in the constitution, temperament, &c., of invalids, and treats each patient as though he were a fac simile of some normal type from which no alteration was possible. It is evident that this is all wrong, since the modifying circumstances of each case require that its treatment should be based on the character of the symptoms and not on the name of the disease,—should be comprehensive in its character and, with full consideration of the changing nature of symptoms, be adapted to the wants of the case as fully as the treasury of the *Materia Medica* will permit.

Moliere exhibits a keen appreciation of the ridiculous character of routine practice in his day, in the closing part of *Le Malade Imaginaire*, where the nature of the examination of an applicant for the doctorate is thus burlesqued. The Examiners, with all pomp and dignity, ask—

“Cum permissione domini præsidis,  
Doctissimæ Facultatis,  
Et totius his nostris actis  
Companiæ assistantis,  
Domandabo tibi, docte bacheliere,  
Quæ sunt remedia  
Quæ, in maladia  
Dite hydropisia  
Convenit facere!”

And the candidate answers—

“Clysterium donare,  
Postea seignare  
Ensuita purgare,”

And this answer is furnished as to the treatment of a variety of diseases, which are brought forth by the learned examiners to test the candidate's knowledge. Finally, however, the question is propounded, what should be done if the opinionated invalid wouldn't get well, when the answer is repeated, as before, with an appendix showing his unshaken belief in the virtue of his treatment;

“Clysterium donare,  
Postea seignare,  
Ensuita purgare,  
Reseignare, repurgare et reclysterisare.”



The delighted board of examiners cry out in full chorus;

"Vivat, vivat, vivat, vivat, cent fois vivat,  
 Novus doctor, qui tam bene parlat;  
 Mille, mille annis, et manget et bibat,  
 Et seignet et tuat!"

Thus far I have considered the subject of Quackery as existing in honest minds, the result of ignorance of those strict logical rules that enable us to apply known facts to our studies and to the needs of our time. The Quackery is not intentional. Indeed, systems of extra-professional Quackery have not, as a general thing, originated in a desire to delude or deceive mankind. Most often they have had their origin in a sincere desire to benefit the race, which the originators endeavored to effect by using means they had found, or known, to be serviceable under certain circumstances. The merit of sincerity can consequently be freely admitted in such cases. Where, however, systems arise or are carried out, through the boasting pretensions of the mere charlatan, who clothes his ignorance in high sounding verbosity, no claim to our respect can be lodged in consequence of the truth involved, nor, on the other hand, is there any reason why we should sally out—Don Quixotte-like, sword-in-hand—to attack the wind-mills which keep up the roaring noise and continuous whirring about our ears. It is far better to let them alone. The wind must cease its blowing,—a calm will sooner or later come,—and the noise of these disturbers of the peace will be hushed into quietness. Who can touch pitch without being defiled,—who has ever ventured into an open contest with Quackery in the world, without receiving much filth and no honor in the combat. It becomes us rather, by our knowledge and practice, to show the world that there is something infinitely superior to mere empty pretensions,—something better in an acquaintance with the true science of Medicine than in a familiarity with all the Quack remedies that have ever been prescribed from the earliest period of time down to the present hour, not even excepting Hoofland's German Bitters, Hobensack's Liver Pills, or the

preparations of "the retired physician," whose "sands of life" require so long a time "to run" entirely out.

The latter form of Quackery, or rather method of practising and disseminating Quackery finds its cultivators among those who know well how to fill their pockets at the expense of public credulity. In a notice of Quacks, we must necessarily separate this class from the other, to which we have admitted the existence of a sincere belief in the efficacy of the compounds offered by it to the public. In doing this, I wish it distinctly understood that, I do not intend to designate, by name, any members of either class, giving no opinion as to merit, on the score of sincerity, between the pretensions of "*Old Jacob Townsend*" and his rival "*Dr. S. P. Townsend*" of Sarsaparilla memory, or between any other representatives of "old foggydom" or "thriving young America" in the army of Quackery. I propose describing the genera, embraced in the Class *Quack* and Order *Medical*,—leaving to every one the selection of the particular individuals belonging to either genus.

I. *The honest or sincere Quack.* He may spring from humble origin, be devoid of all educational or social refinement, or he may have been brought up under the full blaze of knowledge, have had his mind stored with the lore of Theology, the contents of Law's musty tomes, or the practical hints of Medicine. In the former case, his lack of knowledge leads him to misapprehend the true relation of cause and effect,—to be ignorant of the fact that a sequence is not a consequence. From the want of knowledge he fails, likewise, to recognize the difference between diseases to which he applies the same remedies, under the idea—to use a common phrase—that what is good for one is good for all. Sometimes, indeed, there may be a certain amount of education, but it has had no reference to the subjects of Physiology or Pathology, or to the therapeutic actions of medicines, and the party concerned becomes as blind a believer in the *post hoc ergo propter hoc* doctrine, as his brother born and bred in the darkness of ignorance. Even clergymen and lawyers, confidently believing that certain substances,—certain compounds (of whose constituents they

are absolutely ignorant) have been beneficial to them since such were taken antecedent to their relief from disease,—hesitate not to assert the efficacy of such compounds, and to prescribe them, with great readiness to their friends, for all diseases to which our flesh is heir. Nay, they sometimes think it a most solemn duty to pay a visit to a sick friend, and, without a moment's reflection as to the discourteous nature of such conduct to the attending physician, to recommend the use of their favorite remedy with the most solemn assurances of their belief in its capability of effecting a cure.

To this genus of Quacks, we must add the Physician, who may understand the nature of disease and the therapeutic value of remedies, but who, on account of an attachment to a special system, follows strictly a routine course of treatment, not considering the different circumstances that must attend every case of disease.

Now, these men cannot be branded as impostors, although they are undoubtedly Quacks, resulting always from want of knowledge. The caviller may say here: "what! you must be *bold* sir! to say that the Hon. Vociferous Smith, who has represented his district twice in Congress and is now in the Senate, who has been considered one of the finest linguists and belles-lettres scholars of the present day, is defective in knowledge simply because he has found the Electric-Sugar-coated Pills useful in disease and has deemed it incumbent on him to recommend them to the public in a card;" or perhaps he may exclaim; "you are mad, to say that the Rev. Boanerges Noakes—the light of our Church—is expressing his opinion ignorantly on the subject, when he recommends Baron Munchausen's Dead Shot for Worms;" or he may whisper gently in our ears; "take care,—don't be presumptuous,—you are young, and should not charge Dr. Hippocrates Bolus with want of knowledge because he has always begun his treatment of Pneumonia with ten grains of Calomel and ten of Jalap, and has done this so successfully for thirty odd years as to have acquired the name of "*old ten and ten.*" With all due respect then to the learning and position politically of the Hon. Vociferous

Smith, to the piety and eloquence of the Rev. Boanerges Noakes, and to the hoary-headed experience of Dr. Bolus,—and notwithstanding the complimentary adjectives of “bold,” “mad” and “presumptuous” stare us in the face, we hesitate not to say that each one of them is aiding and abetting the cause of Quackery, and is doing it either from a want of knowledge or a misapplication of his knowledge, in consequence of the adoption of some theory which has obscured his mental vision. Actually they are doing exactly what poor John Smith, in the mountain, does when he recommends his “yarb teas” for all kinds of fevers, and are like the Lord on the battle field who told Hotspur, that

“the sovereign'st thing on Earth  
Was parmaceti, for an inward bruise.”

II. *The Impostor Quack.* Here the subject swells to immense importance. No show of sincerity gilds the quackery of this class of personages. These seize the truths that form the underlying stratum of Quack systems or Quack applications, without any belief in their applicability to the cure of diseases, and with an eye single to the accumulation of wealth. In the manufacture of their nostrums, it is not necessary that any thing useful should form part of the composition, for what is defective, in this particular, is made up by the loud-sounding assertions of the vendor. The columns of our newspapers teem with advertisements, in which rhetoric seems to exhaust itself in sounding forth the virtues of Panacea, Vermifuge, Syrup or Liniment, with huge, lumbering adjectives prefixed in such a way as to attract the unwary and induce them to purchase. The inflated style pervading this class of advertisements would make us believe that the bag, which Æolus gave to his travelling friend, containing the winds closely confined, had been gained possession of by the nostrum-vendors, and that all the winds rushing out at once were disposed to sound forth the merits of their specifics to all quarters of the world. Truly has it been said, *sermo datur omnibus, animi sapientia paucis*,—speech is granted to every one, wisdom but to few.

These advertisements bear, on their face, “the mark of the



beast," since they conjoin diseases, for which their compounds are said to be specific, that have no affinity whatever,—springing from totally different causes, existing in different tissues and indeed having no resemblance. Consumption, Asthma, Ague, Tic Douloureux, Stone, Constipation of Bowels and Dysentery, Scrofula, Fits and Worms, are some of the diseases and affections, for which certain Pills of a world-wide notoriety are said by their London manufacturer to be specially useful. Considered along with their efficacy, the astonishing virtues of Rabelais' sheep sinks into insignificance, and he boasts that, "the doctors in their country made pills of the sheep's dung that would cure seventy-eight kinds of diseases,"—and that if "one of the horns were taken and brayed a little with an iron pestle, or with an andiron, since it was all one, and then buried wherever you will, provided it be where the sun shine and they be watered frequently, in a few months you will have the best Asparagus in the world."

The misery of all this is, that we find, staring us in the face, the announcement that the proprietor of the nostrum is a regular graduate of a medical college, who will be pleased to exhibit Diplomas, from some half dozen different respectable institutions, to such persons as may doubt his being a Doctor by right. This is then employed as an argument in his favor by some, while by others it is considered a proof that medical colleges are degenerating, and not to be compared with those of past years. It is with pleasure we can meet the latter charge and proudly point out, on the page that records the medical history of the present, names as bright as any that have been inscribed on the pages of the past,—men, whose good deeds have not "been interred with their bones," and whose evil ones have been overlooked on account of the brilliancy of the good,—who have filled the chairs of our Medical Colleges, and have graduated within their walls. Impostors have ever crept in where any thing has been attempted on a large scale by mankind. They have imposed on the examiners of Medical Schools and have obtained, in this way, Diplomas far more frequently, we sincerely believe, than such have been secured

in the way of mere barter or sale. Such things are however not peculiar to this country. Men with the endorsement of prominent institutions in France, Germany and Great Britain, are to be found among the veriest impostors of the age, rivalling all the ingenuity of the Yankee in their efforts to puff themselves and their preparations into notice. It is true some schools may be found, with greater regard to large receipts arising from hosts of graduates, than to their own reputation arising from the competency of the latter. But this is not a peculiarity of our age. Such things were done centuries ago, and hence it is not just that the Schools of the Present should be taunted with inferiority to those of the Past because they have unfortunately copied some of their bad habits. As far back as the beginning of the Sixteenth Century it is said,\* that "the faculty of Orange (France) admitted ignorant pretenders, as doctors of physic, not only without examining, but even without seeing them." They were however brought to a sense of the contemptible nature of their conduct by that wag—Rabelais, "who sent the usual fees, and had one received doctor there unseen, by the name of Doctor Johannes Caballus, and let the wise professors and the world know afterwards, what a worthy member they had admitted into their body, since that very doctor was his Jack-ass."

The impostor is one of the vilest excrescences on the body politic, and, like some tumors, the more it is irritated the more rapid and luxuriantly does it grow. He must have a singular combination of qualities,—a harmonious adaptation of plausibilities that shall cover up his deceptions as effectually as his sugar-coating conceals the compounds over which it is spread. No truth, that may be the origin or basis of a nostrum or system he has determined to push forward under his auspices, owes its paternity to him. Truths are honestly used by the first class, already described, who sincerely labor for the good of their kind. But the impostor knows no scruples. He is a "man of energy." If cases of cures cannot be procured to defend the claims of his nos-

\* Rabelais I. 11.



trums, he does not hesitate to manufacture such, and, with the lungs of a Boanerges, to proclaim their merits through the length and breadth of the land.

If want of knowledge, or ignorance of its true application be the prominent feature in the first genus of Quacks, *audacity* occupies the same position in the second genus. "Dare every thing" is its motto. Its name is Legion. Impostors swarm through the country in the shape of vendors of corn-salves, tooth-ache drops, essences containing the virtues of all medicines extant, and pills much to be extolled for their virtues and their—cheapness, the latter indeed constituting a great reason why they should be purchased by all, on whom the itinerant calls:—they occupy the quiet recesses of pleasant little villages and mountain-sides, in the shape of cancer doctors and men exceedingly learned in the wonderful art of Urinoscopy;—as we enter larger towns and cities, symptoms of their presence are found in the shape of placards, show-bills, and recommendations on fences, piles of brick, lime houses and public buildings, inviting the public to try somebody's never-failing Liniment or Blood-purifier, or to call upon Dr. Mendacium "who *cures* all diseases of the ear and eye without any charge whatever," and still stronger symptoms yet appear in large flaunting signs, hung on the outer walls of buildings that are decorated with all that art or extravagance can furnish within, and devoted to the sale of the impostor's commodities. They boast themselves the untiring friend of the poor man, to whom they offer their remedies free of charge,—knowing that such seeming philanthropy is a good investment towards attracting substantial aid from the rich;—they invite sufferers from vicious practices to come to them and be healed;—and while they extract wealth from the pockets of their unwary patients, they flood the advertising columns of the daily prints with advertisements that make the virtuous youth tremble at their filth, the delicate cheek of the maiden to be crimsoned with blushes if her chaste eye should by accident fall upon them, and the father to keep the daily papers from the perusal of his children. In this latter form, Quackery has assumed so bold a front, that its advertisements have become

fountains of pollution. Where ignorance is surely bliss, knowledge of the vilest diseases of our race is thrust before the pure, good and virtuous of our land. Such are the effects of the spread of Quackery in our time. Be its pretensions what they may,—be the real virtues of its nostrums never so useful in disease,—the basis on which the dealer constructs his plans is the desire to palm off something on the community that will put money in his pocket.

Let us now glance briefly at the success of Quackery and the causes that produce it. This success does not consist in the attainment of that good name which dieth not, but in the acquirement of piles of gold that may gild the impositions and fraud by which it has been obtained, purchase a false position in society for the Quack, and, after his death, build up a monument to his memory in which the beauties of Sculpture and Architecture shall be employed to mark, with ostentation, the place of his interment. But there is a just punishment of evil deeds, awarded by mankind to the unworthy, either during their life or after death. If contemporaneous history be not impartial, posthumous history is. The good may suffer contumely and reproach during life, but the purity of their intentions, the justness of their lives will be vindicated at some time or other, and posthumous praise will be theirs. The bad also, although plenty and success may seem to smile upon them, will have, after death, if not before it, their real unworthiness displayed by the stripping off of the gilded mask which concealed it. The former will live in the memory of their race, will have their names prized as precious jewels, and their deeds will become familiar as household words. The latter will live only in the shame that is their due, and memory will refer to them and their success as examples to be avoided by others; their piles of wealth will dwindle away, as ill-gotten gains ever must, without being of substantial benefit to their heirs. These results are beautifully displayed in the lives and deaths of the beloved physician and his antipode—the brawling impostor. The former is recollected, by his patients and their children, only with love, and little ones will be taught to prattle his name as that of a great and good man;

Baltimore Md.  
Baltimore Md.  
Baltimore Md.

while the Quack is soon forgotten,—his splendid success living in memory as the gaudy scenes of a panorama which are, after all, the poorest imitations of something greater and more glorious that is real. Where is a fame more desirable than that of a Jenner, a Rush, and a host of worthies of our profession? Propriety forbids the mention of others, with a world-wide notoriety as Quacks during life, who have gone down to their graves,—their magnificent fortunes squandered by extravagant heirs,—their nostrums only found on the shelves of some old fashioned apothecary and their places filled, in the estimation of the credulous public, by some newer preparation with a more high-sounding and attractive title. Such is the success of the impostor? Which, gentlemen, would you have attached to your names? Will it not be your highest aim,—your proudest aspiration to merit the good will of your brethren by your good deeds, than to gain gold by means that will only call forth contempt? “A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches.”

Of the causes of the success of Quackery it may probably be laid down as one of the most prominent, the disposition mankind has to repose confidence in those who loudly assert their ability to *cure* disease. This disposition rests on the principle of Faith, which never requires proof for the support of any assertion from those in whom confidence is placed. And this confidence is readily reposed in any man who exhibits much show of knowledge conjoined with a confidence in the value and importance of that knowledge. The relation of mind and body is so intimate, that where the former is fully satisfied, the recuperative energies of the latter are much better fitted to achieve the overthrow of any disease present for which they may be adequate. This occurs without reference to the medical agents employed in the case. The honest physician too often overlooks the means by which this faith in his own powers can be obtained,—relies on his knowledge and, like every wise man, is perfectly conscious where that is defective and will not hesitate to say so. In this way, he depends upon his character, as a man, to sustain him as a physician. The Quack, however, has no care for his character as a man, but, boasting loudly of the effi-

Reasonable Man's View

cacy of his remedies and asserting that *they* never fail, obtains just the very faith, for the want of which the physician fails to succeed. This confident manner attracts to the Quacks many of the gentler sex, naturally trustful of those who seem bold and self-reliant, who, with all the tender gratefulness of their nature, endeavor to repay for the supposed benefits they have received, by inducing their friends to come to the same fountain of relief. They throng the sick room and, constituting themselves, with the kindest intentions, special consulting physicians in the case, recommend the various nostrums of the day with an enthusiasm worthy of a much better cause.

Woman's aid constitutes thus the second cause of the success of Quackery, and it is indirectly a result of the first. A host of female would-be missionaries is raised up to bring the healing merits of Quack compounds before the community. If family medicine-chests are fairly entitled to the name of family-enemies, at least they contain nothing the composition of which is not known to those who use it, but what must be said of nostrums, whose composition and true properties are unknown to those using and prescribing them. Yet it is with the zest of almost fanatical zeal, that some of the gentler sex will urge the use of such articles on their friends and acquaintances. They introduce them into their own family-circles and soon bring husband and children into the ranks of the promoters of Quackdom, with very little astonishment either on our part, as woman is intimately associated with much that can cheer the sick room, ease the fevered brow and quiet the restless pulse of care.

A third cause arises from the apparent beneficial results which follow the use of Quack remedies. These may be pointed at by the Quack himself as overwhelming proofs of the value of his preparations. Let us examine into this apparent benefit from their use. We do not pretend to say that cures are not occasionally effected by the employment of such preparations; they often contain efficacious substances, and it must sometimes happen that these are suited to the diseases of those using them. We commenced our discussion of the subject by the assertion that truth was gen-



Dr. Edward M. Mearns

J. Mearns

erally, in some way, involved in the composition of all quack medicines. In their indiscriminate application to disease, they may occasionally meet with that for which they are specially fitted, just as in the Lottery, some one will draw a prize, although thousands may groan over blanks. Yet the one prize seems to beget more partizan friends than the thousand blanks will produce of enemies.

It is mostly in Chronic cases where this class of nostrums are employed. In many of these, the system has been freed from disease by a previous course of medicine, and the recuperative energies of the patient are just coming into action, when the quack specific is brought into use, and then—of course, unless this is really detrimental to the animal economy, convalescence goes on and the patient gets well. All honor and credit is attached to the patent medicine, while the physician, who has carefully aided in the removal of such obstacles as were in the way of the *vis medicatrix nature*, is denounced as ignorant of his profession and entirely lacking in skill. With such cases continually before us,—not few in number and widely separated, but many and frequent,—we are able to appreciate the meaning of the terse proverb, now three centuries old;—"Happy is the physician, whose coming is desired at the declension of a disease."

Another mode of getting the credit of curing disease is that adopted by the disciples of Homeoquackery. This affects special ability to treat chronic diseases. These are often of such a character that the recovery of the patient is much delayed on account of imprudence in diet and regimen. The Physician neglects to impress, on his patient's mind, the necessity of an attention to these matters, and the patient trusts that the medicines employed will bring the desired relief under any circumstances; the Homeoquack lays greatest stress on these particulars, and declaims *learnedly* as to the injuries which will inevitably result if imprudences in diet or regimen are permitted, speaks of the great care which should be taken in consequence of the wonderful potency of his pillules, and administers, with all the solemnity that fanaticism or imposture can command, those little embodiments of the millionth or decillionth part of a grain

or drop. The patient gets well,—all he wanted was proper attention to diet and regimen. It was strictly paid and *globules* get all the credit.

Again, the statistics of Homeoquackery show how numerous are the assumed acute forms of disease treated by it and the astonishing amount of cures. The first are not substantiated by the condition of the health of the community in which they are asserted to have occurred, and hence the second necessarily falls to the ground. A family, with an armament of globules at command, is always getting sick, merely for the purpose of getting well again,—adding, with recovery from each imaginary disease, additional strength to their credence in the system. It is so easy to set up a man of straw, and belabor him with blows or pierce him in a thousand places with the sharpest of daggers. The valor or skill required in such a combat is like that which Falstaff exhibited, according to his own account, in the attack upon the men in buckram.

A fourth cause, and probably one of the most powerful, contributing to the success of Quackery is the opposition, decided, full and firm, which it meets from our profession. It is difficult to restrain our feelings of indignation, when we see an Impostor palming off the grossest absurdities on a credulous people. But the expression of that indignation, accompanied by any violent means to put down such imposition, always gives the Impostor an advantage, since he can raise the cry of “Persecution,” which is calculated to waken a tender cord of sympathy in the human breast. Men are found on all sides who will aid him, as a persecuted man, against the medical profession, and the latter is charged with being actuated alone by “desire for self-aggrandizement.” From a feeling of tenderness for the supposed oppressed and persecuted, there arises a species of confidence in his nostrums, and hosts of zealous friends proclaim their virtues in all directions. This is not an imaginary case. The success of many a Quack compound has rested solely on the opposition it received from the Profession,—an opposition springing from a full belief in the necessity of unmasking imposition wherever found, but which alas! only eventuated in the



sympathies of the public being aroused so as to furnish the strongest support to the very imposition it was thought proper should be put down.

These constitute the most prominent causes of the success of Quackery. It has invaded all countries,—infested all classes of society from the lowest to the highest, and attracted admirers and worshippers from the professional as well as the unprofessional. It succeeds best where the greatest opposition meets it. Like the vile Canada thistle, cutting down one hardy old stalk only restricts the vigor of the plant for a short time to the root, so that it bursts forth again in a number of young stalks, which will be more pernicious to the soil than their parent. It is not by pruning off privilege after privilege, or by using the scythe of the law, that we can remove such vile weeds from society. They will flourish all the better for the pruning, and even when trampled under the feet they will still put forth luxuriant growth. It is ever thus with noxious weeds,—connected with their constitution is a kind of pertinacious hold on vitality, most difficult to destroy. The same amount of rude treatment would destroy a delicate plant, prized for its beauty and fragrance. There is but one method of removing vile weeds from any soil, and that is to dig carefully about their roots until the connection of these is broken off from the soil, and then to consume them by fire. It is only by eradication that they can be destroyed.

How shall Quackery be eradicated from its present position? Shall it be by the use of the strong hand of the Law? This would only cut off one head of the hundred-headed monster, and, from the trunk, another would speedily grow. No! it must be treated as the weed,—its connections with the feelings of the people must be severed and *then* it can be hurled into the stream of oblivion, and all recollection of it will speedily be lost. This can be best effected by instructing the people in the mysteries of the human frame. Such instruction should be commenced in the school, so that the child may learn at an early age the wonders of the house he lives in. When knowledge is acquired of such subjects, the attainments of those who have spent their lives in these stu-

dies will be appreciated and the nature of the Quack understood. It is by disseminating knowledge of this kind throughout the land, by showing our fellow-citizens that pecuniary emolument cannot be the only motive that prompts the true Physician to the practice of his profession, and that the all-powerful incentive with him is love of his science, that we can hope to drive Quackery from its present post. Disseminate information on Anatomy and Physiology among the people, and the days of Quackery *in* and *out* of the Profession will be numbered. Briareus will then be overpowered, and, notwithstanding his hundred hands and fifty heads,—he will be covered up by the Ætna of public indignation.

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Box 59

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